
Education Committee

HB 2414

Brief Description: Regarding Washington's academic assessment system.

Sponsors: Representatives Haler, Talcott and McCune.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to revise the state plan under the federal No Child Left Behind Act so that assessments in grades three, five, six, and eight do not rely on open-ended questions and to permit inclusion of locally selected assessments to give school districts an option other than the Washington Assessment of Student Learning at those grade levels.

Hearing Date: 1/19/06

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, in order to receive federal funds under Title I, each state must annually submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that details the state's system of academic standards, assessments, and accountability. By the 2005-06 school year, the state's assessment system must include yearly assessments of students in each of grades three through eight in reading and mathematics, plus at least one assessment of these subjects for high school students. By 2007-08, assessments in science must be administered in at least one elementary, middle, and high school grade.

Under state law, Washington's assessment system already includes the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading, writing, and mathematics at grades four, seven, and ten, as well as a science assessment in grades five, eight, and ten. Therefore, the additional testing requirement to comply with NCLB will be reading and mathematics assessments administered in grades three, five, six, and eight.

The NCLB also requires a state assessment system to have certain characteristics, including:

- Assessments must be aligned with state academic content and achievement standards.
- The system must include measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding of challenging content.
- Assessments must be valid and reliable to use in measuring annual improvement in student achievement (adequate yearly progress).

- The system must be of adequate technical quality, supported by evidence from test publishers and other sources.

Under DOE rules, a state's system can be based on a uniform set of statewide assessments or a combination of state and local assessments. However, if local assessments are included, the state must assure they meet the same characteristics as a state assessment and the results can be aggregated and compared across the state. The state must also demonstrate that its overall system has a rational and coherent design.

Under Washington's NCLB plan, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) has proposed and is implementing a uniform set of statewide assessments, using the WASL in reading and mathematics at each grade level required to be assessed under NCLB.

Summary of Bill:

The SPI must revise the state NCLB plan so that assessments in grades three, five, six, and eight assess student learning in reading, math, and science without subjective, open-ended responses. In addition, the assessment system must incorporate a combination of statewide and locally selected assessments in order to provide options other than the WASL for school districts to use in grades three, five, six, and eight. The SPI must develop the revised plan using an open and participatory process.

Under the revised plan, the SPI submits options for locally selected assessments to the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE approves at least three options to be made available to school districts. School districts may use an approved option in grades three, five, six, and eight, but must use the same assessment for each cohort of students to ensure comparability of scores and measurement of learning gains.

The SPI submits the proposed revised plan to the Education Committees of the Legislature no later than the 2007 legislative session. After the Legislature formally approves the plan, the SPI submits it to federal authorities to ensure locally selected assessments for use during the 2007-08 school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 10, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.